

HABS No. PA-1106

Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley
(Saint Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church)
Saint Peters Road, .3 mile west of Church Road,
.4 mile south of Yellow Springs Road
Devault Vicinity (East Whiteland Township)
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. PA-1106

CHURCH OF SAINT PETER-IN-THE-GREAT VALLEY

(Saint Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church)

Location: Saint Peters Road, .3 mile west of Church Road, .4 mile south of Yellow Springs Road, Devault Vicinity (East Whiteland Township), Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner and Occupant: Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley.

Present Use: Church.

Statement of Significance: Saint Peter's, erected in 1744, had been considerably altered over the years, but in 1944 it was restored as accurately as possible to its original design. It served as a chapel for the British Army and a hospital for both the British and American Armies during the Revolutionary War.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATIONA. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1744.
2. Architect, builder, suppliers: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Church of Saint ~~Peter-in-~~ the-Great Valley. The earliest known deed for the land is dated May 30, 1774. It was deeded to William Moore, Thomas James, Morris Griffith, Richard Richison and John Cuthbert for the rent of "one ear of Indian corn." The church was paid for by private subscriptions.
4. Original plans, construction: The original church was a simple building, measuring approximately 47' by 28', facing south. There was a central entrance flanked by a window on either side. The altar was located at the east end. In 1744 the bare structure of the walls and roof were completed. The original sacristy was a small stone projection on the north side of the church. The doorway connecting the sacristy and church was located just west of the pulpit. The plan of Saint Peter's is essentially the same as the earlier Saint David's of Radnor. The 1744 church replaced an earlier log structure which served as the church.
5. Alterations and additions: There is a record indicating that thirty-two pews had been order for the church in 1749. In December 1750 a gallery was decided upon that would extend across the west end and the south side. By 1754 it was completed by Edward Pearce for the sum of six pounds. In 1762 two stoves were ordered, there had been no heating before this, and two stables were built by Edward Pearce.

In 1770 a stone wall was built along the front of the church-yard. It is recorded that this was carried out by John Gronow for the sum of twenty pounds. In 1785 the roof was raised for thirty-two pounds. In 1787 the vestry decided upon the erection of a pulpit, reading desk and communion table constructed by Jno. Wayne for the price of twelve pounds. This altar was placed beneath the large arched window in the east elevation. The high pulpit, with the clerk's reading desk beneath it, was placed against the north wall.

In 1830 more destructive alterations were made. The older high pews were removed and new low-backed pews with panels and moldings of the period were installed. The high pulpit and clerk's desk beneath were removed and the pulpit was placed in the east end. The interior was also plastered at this time. It has not been determined whether the round-topped windows were replaced by the square-topped windows at this time or in the later additions of 1856.

Numerous changes occurred in 1856. The old vestry was removed which weakened the structure. Three iron tie-rods had to be used to strengthen the walls. Then a 15' addition was built on the east elevation. This destroyed the original symmetry of the church. The addition served as a sacristy and Sunday school. The walls of the church were pebble-dashed and whitewashed. As mentioned, the round-topped windows were possibly replaced at this time and the large chancel window was walled over. A tin roof replaced the old shingled roof. The south gallery was removed at this time and the interior was painted grey.

In 1901 attempts were made to restore parts of the church. The pulpit and altar were removed from the east end and returned to their proper place. The round-topped windows were restored to correspond with the head of the south door. Unfortunately, external brown-stuccoed voussoirs were applied. The most damaging of these alterations was the covering of the old stone paving with wooden flooring. This required the application of a thick layer of cement which obliterated the graves beneath the floor. The graves were those of Lady Rebecca Moore, Margaret Moore and Robert Powel. At this time the pews were moved and small unsightly seats were installed. A one-and-a-half-story parish house was added to the north of the 1856 sacristy and Sunday School.

Between 1939 and 1944 a complete restoration was undertaken by R. Brognard Okie. Thus the church has been restored to some extent to its original appearance. The parish house was extended to the north in 1952.

6. Old views and references:

Views: A small collection views from circa 1900 on, is to be found in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

References: Sources of information to be found in the Chester County Historical Society - Classified printed and manuscript file under the heading: East Whiteland Township, Churches - Protestant Episcopal-St. Peter's.

Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, Church of Saint Peter in the Great Valley 1700-1940, August Dietz and his Son, Richmond, Virginia, 1944.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Anthony Wayne, a prominent Colonial figure, was a member of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley, as was Loyalist Judge William Moore. Patrick Anderson was a member of the Vestry and was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1778. During the Revolutionary War the church served as a hospital for both the British and American Armies. There are grave stones along the west wall of the church of both American and British soldiers. Also, just before and after the Paoli Massacre in 1777, the British Army under Major General Gray used the church as an army chapel. (Eberlein and Hubbard, Church of St. Peter-in-the-Great Valley 1700-1940).

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: None Known.

Prepared by Bart Anderson-August 1958
Curator, Chester County Historical Society
and
Georgianna Daross-June 1967
Architectural Historian, HABS

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The original church was a simple symmetrical structure with a central arched door flanked by an arched window on either side. Over the years numerous changes were made including the replacement of the arched windows, and the addition of a vestry, Sunday school and parish house. Between 1939 and 1944 the church was restored to some extent to its original character.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

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1. Over-all dimensions: The original church is 47' (three-bay front) by 28' and is one story with an interior gallery. There is a 15' addition to the east forming a fourth bay across the front. This addition is the same height as the main church, but it contains two floors. There is a one-and-a-half-story parish house addition to the north of the 15' wing.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Random rubble; stuccoed and painted.
4. Chimneys: There is a chimney pot located on the ridge of the roof at the east end.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There is a double paneled door with a semicircular fanlight on the south (front) elevation. This is a reproduction of the original door.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Large arched windows flank the entrance on the south elevation; one to either side. These windows are 1944 reproductions of the original windows. The paneled shutters are also reproductions of the original.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Steep gable roof with wooden shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The cornice is a reproduction of the original. The gutter has been incorporated into the upper section of the cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The original building was simple, facing south, with, a center door flanked by a window on either side. The altar is at the east end. Thirty-two pews were first ordered in 1749. The pews used now are copies of the 1830 pews. A gallery was installed in 1754 which extended along the west and south sides. In 1787 the vestry ordered a pulpit, reading desk and communion table, and ordered the committee to "floore and Banaster" them. Jno. Wayne was given the contract for twelve pounds.
2. Stairways: Rebuilt stairway to gallery.
3. Flooring: Two hundred-year-old bricks were brought in from Massachusetts during the 1944 restoration. They are laid in a lateral pattern.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Replastered in the 1944 restoration.

5. Doorways and doors: Mostly renewed in the 1944 restoration.
6. Trim: Mostly renewed in the 1944 restoration.
7. Hardware: Mostly renewed in the 1944 restoration.
8. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures.
9. Heating: Modern system.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The church faces south, on a hill.
2. Enclosures: Stone wall around graveyard.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks, driveways: The driveway leads from Saint Peters Road along the east side of the church. There are walks within the graveyard.
5. Landscaping, gardens: Well landscaped with many large shade trees.

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